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## PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

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### JUDICIAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT

The Rev. **Susan Henry-Crowe**, dean of Cannon Chapel and religious life at Emory University, was elected president of the Judicial Council. She is the first woman to hold that office.

### NORTH GEORGIANS HELD LEADERSHIP ROLES

- Clergy delegate **Jonathan Holston**, pastor of St. James UMC in Atlanta, served as chair of the Financial Administration legislative committee. He presented legislative reports on the church's finances to the assembly.

- Lay Delegate **Marget Sikes** served on the Church and Society committee. She presented the minority report regarding the Church's relationship with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive

Choice. The minority report called for withdrawal of the Church's name from RCRC, but to remain connected in observer status. (After a vote by the assembly, the majority report rather than the minority report was upheld. The Board of Church and Society and the Women's Division of the Board of Global Ministries will continue their relationship with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.)

- If the laity of The United Methodist Church want to reclaim the Methodist heritage of winning communities for Christ, they have to invite people to church, carry the name of Christ with them and claim a personal ministry. That is the advice **Lyn Powell**, lay leader of the North Georgia Annual Conference, gave to the 992 delegates attending General Conference.

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## General Conference 2008 Fort Worth, Texas April 23 - May 2

*Focusing on "A Future With Hope," 992 delegates from around the world met in Fort Worth, Texas for the 2008 General Conference session. General Conference is the top policy-making body of the United Methodist Church.*

*It meets once every four years to revise church law (our Book of Discipline), as well as adopt resolutions on current moral, social, public policy and economic issues. It also approves plans and budgets for church-wide programs for the next four years.*

*The North Georgia Conference was represented by 28 delegates as well as reserve delegates, legislative recorders, marshals and pages, translators, musicians, conference officials, and visitors.*

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## NEWS WRAP-UP

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### BUDGET APPROVED

Delegates approved a \$642 million denominational spending plan for the next four years built around four areas of focus for the immediate future:

- Developing principled Christian leaders;
- Creating new places for new people by starting new

congregations and renewing existing ones;

- Engaging in ministries with the poor; and
- Improving global health, especially attacking the killer diseases of poverty.

The budget calls for a 1.2 percent increase over each of the four years from 2009 to 2012.

*read more* 

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## 2008 GENERAL CONFERENCE NEWS WRAP-UP

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### MISSION STATEMENT

Delegates refined the mission statement of the United Methodist Church to read: “The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

### KATRINA RELIEF NEEDED

United Methodists have been generous in their response to Hurricane Katrina relief—but more is needed. Bishop William Oden of Dallas thanked church members for the \$3 million raised so far for the Katrina Church Recovery Appeal, but he called for a recommitment to the rebuilding and reconstruction of the Gulf Coast.

### MONEY FOR FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA

The church received a \$5 million grant from the U.N. Foundation, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to fight malaria and other diseases of poverty. Also at the conference, a basketball signed by United Methodist bishops was auctioned to benefit Nothing But Nets, raising \$429,030.

### RETIREMENT AGE

The assembly raised the mandatory retirement age to 72 for clergy and bishops.

### REORGANIZATION

The assembly passed 23 constitutional amendments which allow for the creation of a regional conference for the U.S. and change the words “central conference” to “regional conference.” The legislation does not create a U.S. regional conference but makes it possible for General Conference to do so at a later time. A study committee was appointed to bring recommendations to the 2012 General Conference.

### FEWER U.S. BISHOPS

General Conference established a new formula that will cause four U.S. jurisdictions to lose a bishop at the 2012 jurisdictional conferences. The savings will be used to fund new episcopal areas outside the United States. Because the Southeastern Jurisdiction already has one less bishop than it is allotted, our Annual Conferences will not be affected.

### PROMISE TO ‘WITNESS’

People who join United Methodist churches henceforth will promise to be faithful in “their witness” as well as in their prayers, presence, gifts and service. The conference also voted to add the witness phrase to the liturgy used by the church when a person makes a profession of membership.

### VOTING RIGHTS

If annual conferences approve the constitutional amendment, associate members, provisional (probationary) members and local pastors may vote for delegates to General and Jurisdictional conferences. To be eligible to vote, local pastors must have completed the Basic Course of Study or master of divinity degree and provisional members must have completed all educational requirements. Both must have served under appointment for two consecutive years immediately preceding an election. Only ordained members in full connection may serve as delegates.

### SACRAMENTAL RIGHTS FOR DEACONS

District superintendents or pastors may now ask the bishop to give sacramental authority to a deacon if an elder is not present. That right is confined to the location of a deacon’s primary appointment.

### HOMOSEXUALITY

Delegates voted to retain statements in the Social Principles that the United Methodist Church “does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.” Language was also retained:

- Affirming that all persons are “individuals of sacred worth created in the image of God”;
- Asking “families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends”;
- Upholding clergy’s responsibility to be “celibate in singleness and faithful in marriage”; and
- Prohibiting clergy from performing same sex ceremonies.